

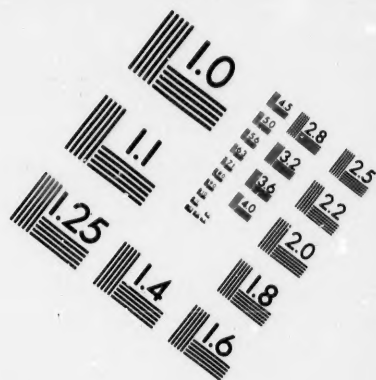
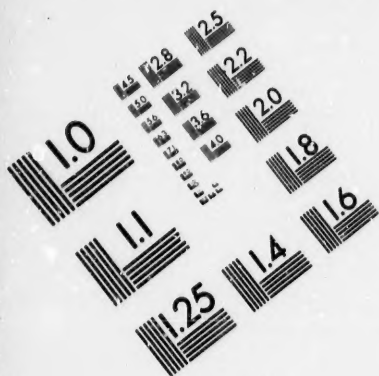
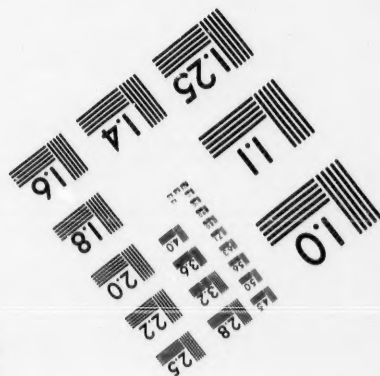
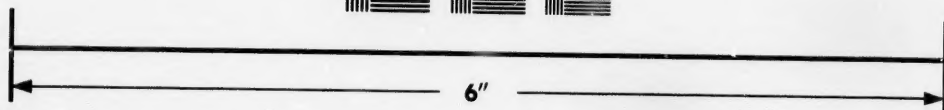
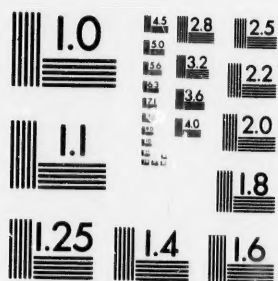


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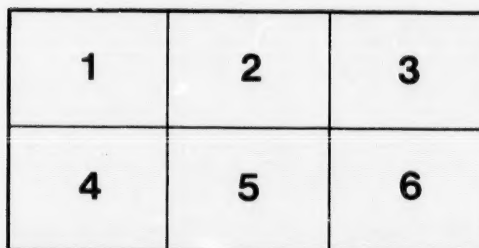
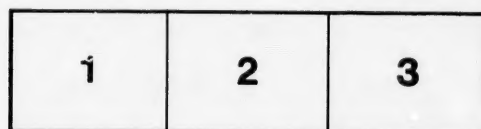
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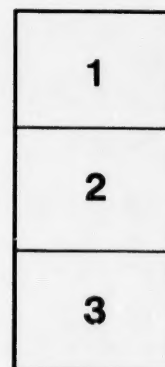
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TO
THE HOUSE OF GOD,
THE CHRISTIAN'S HOME.

A SERMON

PREACHED

AT THE CONSECRATION OF ST. MICHAEL'S CHAPEL,
QUEBEC,

On Tuesday, 18th September, 1856,

BY

JOHN, BISHOP OF FREDERICTON.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

(The profits of the Publication will be given to the Building Fund of St. Michael's Chapel.)

QUEBEC:

PRINTED BY P. LAMOUREUX, 12 MOUNTAIN STREET
1856.

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MY DEAR MR. MOUNTAIN,

The sermon, of which you were so kind as to request the publication, I now enclose, though it is only a plain unpretending discourse. That God may vouchsafe His blessing on all your labours, and especially on this House of Prayer, which owes its existence to the holy zeal of yourself and those worthy lay-brethren with whom you are happily associated, is the fervent prayer of

Your affectionate friend and brother

JOHN FREDERICTON.

FREDERICTON, Sept. 30, 1856.

PSALM

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PSALM XXVII, 4. (Prayer Book Version.)—*“One thing have I desired of the Lord, which I will require: even that I may dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the fair beauty of the Lord, and to visit His Temple.”*

ONE mark which distinguishes the sincere Christian from the man of the world, is the view which he takes of the services of the House of God. A decent respect to outward ceremonial all are obliged to shew: obliged by the traditions of their fathers, the laws of their country, the custom of the world, and by having on one day in the week little else to do. But with the man of the world it is only an outward ceremonial. The worship and rites of the Church never go further with him. He discerns not through the veil of the sign, the inward and significant grace which accompanies it. He stays only in the threshold, and never enters within the sanctuary. All that is about him displays this spirit. His manner, indolent, irreverent, familiar; his time of coming, late; his postures, easy and domestic; his looks, bold and unabashed; his criticisms, free and frequent; his whole bearing is that of a person who does not feel himself in God's presence, who is at ease, pleased with himself, unconscious of his lost estate, careless about his salvation, of one who comes to spend an hour, to be amused and go away. Yet here, alas, is an immortal soul? Why was it formed? What are its

capacities and its privileges? What is its present character? and what will be its end? One shudders at the thought. Here is a man dreaming of a feast, while his house is in flames, and every instant escape is less possible.

The Psalmist, in this blessed Manual of Devotion, sets before us a very different picture. He describes that longing, eager, reverent desire, which he felt to enter into the presence of his God. This one thing was near his heart, this was the object of his affections. The presence of God was to his soul all in all. No portion on earth, no inheritance like this. For this fountain his weary eyes looked out, here he refreshed his parched lips, and went on his way, even in the desert, rejoicing.

Let me endeavour then, by God's help, to explain to you the several points of view in which the Psalmist speaks of the House of God.

I. *The House of God is an object of intense delight.*—"One thing have I desired of the Lord." Why does the good man delight in the House of God? Is it (as the world calumniously asserts) because he loves the material building? Because he delights in stones, and bricks, and mortar? Is it (as men say) because every man must have some object of amusement, and this is his? Far otherwise. He delights in God's House, because he delights in God; and because he feels an affection for every thing which reminds him of God. His reverent affection for the Being that is wor-

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shipped, makes him delight in the place where that worship is paid. He does not love God for the sake of the place, but the place for the sake of God. And real affection will always make itself felt by some outward and visible sign. Even the dumb beasts speak by significant symbols; and manifest pleasure, gratitude, or distress, by outward emotions. Much more will real religion in the heart of man speak outwardly: not always with the same degree of emotion, nor in the same manner, but it will speak, and it will be heard. Mary sat silent at our Saviour's feet; but her silence was more eloquent than words; and it was Mary who anointed our Lord for His burial. Nor is this delight in the House of God confined to the Jewish religion. It is no longer limited to one Temple, but transferred to all. It is the homage which a believing heart pays to the Creator of all material and intellectual beauty, the Redeemer of lost mankind, and the Sanctifier of all the elect people of God.

II. *The House of God is a place of continual resort.*—What is the Psalmist's petition? "that I may *dwell* in the House of the Lord all the days of my life." The Author of the Psalm, if he were David, had no dwelling place within the Temple, yet he loved to be continually there. Now, if any one should ask, what need there is of frequent services and frequent prayers, may we not ask in return why men are bid to "pray always and not to faint"? Why are they told to pray

without ceasing"? Why is it said of Moses, that, as long as he held up his hands Israel prevailed, but when he let down his hands, Amalek prevailed? Why does the Psalmist say, "seven times a day will I praise Thee?" Why did Daniel pray towards Jerusalem three times a day? Why did Anna the Prophetess depart not from the Temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day? Why did our Lord take long journeys to be present at the Temple-Festivals? Why did He stay behind in the Temple, and replied to those who sought Him, "wist ye not that I must be about My Father's business?" Why did Saint Peter and Saint John go up daily to the Temple at the hour of prayer? Were not all these things written that we might be followers of them, "who through faith and patience inherit the promises?" If we are not of the same mind with Moses, Daniel, Anna, Peter, and John, have we the same faith? Are we of the same religion? Are we travelling the same road? Shall we reach the same end? Do any ask, why should these things be done? We answer in return, because poor perishing sinners, condemned to die, and scarcely, by the mercy of God, saved at last, should never cease their prayers and efforts to escape everlasting destruction. Because their danger is imminent; because their life is short, because much of it is wasted; because "sin lieth at the door;" because judgment is at hand. Here are reasons enough for our spending, not an hour at a time, but whole days, if our strength and the

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duties of life permitted, in prayer to God, that we might be saved. If we believe the truths we utter in the Creed, such questions could never be asked.

III. *The House of God is a place of holy contemplation.*—"To behold the fair beauty of the Lord." The image and glory of God is seen in His Blessed Son, our Saviour Jesus Christ. And as Christ in person is invisible, He has left behind him the double witness of the written word, and of the ordinances of His Church, to convey the impress of His glorious name. The House of God holds up these things to us in a glass. Here is continually read the volume of His Word. Here we are reminded of the chief events of our Lord's life. We hear of His Circumcision, His Baptism, His Fasting and Temptation, His Miracles of mercy, His Transfiguration, His Rejection, Crucifixion, Resurrection, Ascension, the Mission of the Holy Ghost, and the lives and deaths of those who were nearest to Christ. Here all the great mysteries of our Faith are enacted. Here we begin to live, and are new-born; here we learn to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Saviour. Here the death of Christ is represented and commemorated. Here is life in Christ and death with Christ, and life in glory all set before us. Is it not "good for us to be here"?

IV. *The House of God is a place of holy enquiry, and seeking after divine counsel.*—There was a Jewish custom, to which the Scripture often refers, of seeking counsel of God by the Urim and

Thummim on the breast-plate of the High Priest, which signified light and perfection. Now, though this miraculous kind of counsel be withdrawn, the spirit of Him, Whose name is "Wonderful, Counsellor," ever abides with His Church. An express promise is given, that, "if we ask the Father any thing in His name, He will do it." Where then can we better address our petitions, than in the place where He has promised to dwell? Where can we hope to make more progress in the divine life, where will our hearts be more drawn and lifted up to God, where will they be more likely to be filled with penitential sorrow for sin, than "where two or three are gathered together in His name," and He is "in the midst of them?"

V. *The House of God is a place of comfort and security.*—How holy is the calm which reigns within the House of Prayer! Here is no troubled sea of boiling passion, political agitation, ambitious thrusting one another aside, or "cunning craftiness, whereby men lie in wait to deceive;" here is a peaceful harbour, where the weary soul may lay its cares to rest, and make known all its secret wants and sorrows in the ear of the Most High. And this is often more felt on week-days, when the services are less thronged, and the soul is less disturbed.

VI. *The Lord's House is a place of sacrifice.*—"Therefore," says the Psalmist, "will I offer in His dwelling an oblation with great gladness: I will sing, and speak praises unto the Lord." All

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the sacrifices of the Law were ordered to be performed in the Temple : and though the nature of sacrifice is changed, sacrifice itself is not taken away. The Gospel dispensation is full of sacrifices. The greatest, and only meritorious sacrifice, once offered, and never to be repeated, is that of Jesus Christ Himself. But in subordination to, and commemorative of it, we read of the sacrifice of our bodies, of the pure offering of the Gentiles, universally understood by the Ancient Church of the Holy Eucharist, of the sacrifice of praise, of the gift of our alms brought to the Altar. This word sacrifice applies to them all. Thus we see in how many ways the House of God is a house of mercy to us. It is not like the pool of Bethesda, where, though there lay a great multitude of impotent folk, yet only one at a time could be healed. But here none need be sent empty away. All are invited, none excluded, for God's bounty, like Himself, is without measure or end.

Allow me now to point out to you some duties which ought to be practised by the worshippers in every House of God.

1. We should come to Church in good time; either a little before the service begins, or so as to be present as soon as it begins. To say nothing of the first exhortation, which supposes the congregation to be assembled, it is surely improper to omit the confession of our sins to Almighty God, and to begin the service without the spirit of the Publicans request, "God, be merciful to me a sinner."

2. Every one should kneel down, as soon as he has found his place in Church, and ask God to put into his heart holy and heavenly thoughts, and to enable him to think of His glorious presence, and of the invisible host of Saints and Angels his fellow-worshippers, and to keep far from him wandering, unclean, proud, and passionate thoughts, and to make him fit for receiving the spiritual blessings for which he prays. The same should be done before going out of Church.

3. Every one should bring a Prayer Book to church, that he may join in every part of the Service, and not lose a word. When a person has no Prayer Book, he can make little use of the Psalms of David. For as the Clergyman reads one verse and the people another, the second verse he loses altogether, and probably the sense of both. But if the Psalms be chanted, a person who cannot chant (though most people might learn to do so, if they would take pains,) can follow the singers by reading, for they are sure to sing slower than he can read; but if he have no Prayer Book, he merely listens to the music, which, as a general rule, is not edifying. Even in those parts of the Prayer Book which people know by heart, the having a book before them helps to keep their attention alive, and to prevent their eyes from wandering.

4. Every one who is not infirm should kneel during the prayers. Sitting is an irreverent posture, which we should not adopt, even before our Queen. Now here we profess to worship and

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adore the Great God of Heaven and Earth. Can we worship Him reverently in a sitting posture? Comfort is one thing, worship is another; and we come hither to worship, to kneel before the Lord our Maker, to adore His power in creating us, His love in saving us, His grace in calling us, His mercy in pardoning our guilty souls. What if the veil were withdrawn, and we could behold the Angels around us bending in lowly adoration, and ourselves, miserable sinners, sitting, nay, lounging at our ease! How thoroughly ashamed should we be!

5. The humble posture of our bodies should be accompanied with fervent mental prayer. We should pray with humility, knowing ourselves to be unworthy of the least of all God's mercies; with faith believing that we are called to receive the greatest; with holy confidence in the goodness of God through Christ Jesus; and with glad exultation in the praises of our Saviour and our King. We should do our best to give utterance to our religious fervour by all audibly joining in the words of the service, as the Rubric directs; not whispering them to ourselves, but speaking as loudly as we should do, if we were reading the Scriptures to one another at home. You may think, perhaps, that this is a point of no importance. I believe it to be of great moment. Union in prayer excites corresponding sympathy, and if all were heard to join, our attention must be kept awake. And if you will look into the Psalms of David, you will see that

this general joining in the Prayers and Praises of the Church was intended by the inspired Author, and if intended by him, it is the direction of the Holy Ghost Himself. What are the directions in the Psalms? "Sing unto the Lord, and praise His name; sing unto the Lord, all the whole earth. Tell it out among the heathen that the Lord is King; shew yourselves joyful unto the Lord, all ye lands; sing, rejoice, and give thanks. And let all the people say, Amen; not any one person appointed for the purpose; but all the people, "high and low, rich and poor, one with another." "O praise the Lord with me, and let us magnify His name together." And if we want New Testament comment upon these words, at the very beginning of Christianity, when "great grace was upon them all," they were "continually in the Temple, praising and blessing God" together. So that if you wish to understand the Psalms, you will bring a Prayer Book, and if you wish to obey the directions of the Psalmist, you will sing the words when they are sung, or repeat them aloud when they are read. If you will all do this, you will find satisfaction and delight in the service, greater than I can express.

6. One thing more is to be attended to, that we should endeavour to make the Prayer Book the guide and model of our private and domestic life. Let the spirit of cheerful obedience be followed up in our private and social circles, and instead of disputing about formalism, we should effectually

shut out formality by living spiritually to God and for the next world. And we shall learn to love our Bibles, by practising the directions of our Prayer Books. For none ever loved their Bible better, understood it more thoroughly, or accepted all its truths more simply and heartily, than those good and wise men, who framed these directions, because they thought that living by rule was better than living at random.

Finally, let us raise our grateful thanks to Him Who has enabled you to erect another holy House of God. May it please Him to bless you all in this work, to give you hearts full of devotion and humility in His service, and when your hour of departure comes, may the words you have heard, the prayers you have offered, the sweet songs of Zion you have sung in this House, prepare and fit you for your last prayer on earth, for the stillness and awful darkness of death, and for seeing Him face to face, to Whom our account must be given, of all that we have said here, of all that we have done elsewhere.

